(iv) Good quality retro-reflective road sign boards provided at the road approaches for improved visibility during night time.

(v) Level crossings, on reaching the laid down traffic volume criteria of manning, are being progressively manned. Manning Criteria revised in the current Budget year 2008-09 to include larger numbers of unmanned level crossings.

(vi) As a special measure to reduce the number of level crossings, Zonal Railways have been given power to consider and sanction 'Limited Use Subways' costing upto Rs.50 lakhs, and normal height subway costing upto Rs.1.5 crores on double line and 1.25 crores an single line, wherever technically feasible.

The effectiveness of these measures can be gauged from the fact that in spite of substantial increase in both road and rail traffic, the accidents have not increased substantially.

(c) Yes, to limit and reduce the number of unmanned level crossings, a systematic planned approach has been adopted; though no timeframe has been fixed, the efforts are being pursued, and include the following:

(i) Replacement of existing Level Crossings by providing 'Limited Height Subway' or Normal height Road Under Bridge/Subway wherever technically feasible. At present on Indian Railways, 547 locations have been identified to be replaced by 'Limited Height Subway'.

(ii) Closure of existing Unmanned Level Crossings – LCs where road traffic is low and nearby LCs also exists, the road traffic is diverted to one of them by provision of approach/link roads; closure of one of the level crossings where two or more level crossings exists in close proximity (within one kilometer). Efforts are ongoing for closure of the identified level crossings in close coordination with the State Governments.

(iii) In addition, Railways have decided to provide "Normal Height Subway/Road Under Bridges" at locations of manned level crossings or where unmanned level crossings have qualified for manning as per prevailing criteria of manning and are technically feasible. Cost of such Normal Height Subways shall be borne by Railways as Rs.1.5 crores for double line section and Rs.1.25 crores for single line section; cost of road approaches to be borne by State Governments/local authorities.

Wastage of agricultural food items

*20. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per Rabo India Finance Ltd. wastage of agricultural food items last year was to the extent of Rs. 58,000 crores;

(b) if so, whether the wastage of agricultural food items has been on the rise over the last few years;

(c) the extent of such wastages in the last five years, year-wise and State-wise;

(d) whether his Ministry is planning to amend the Agricultural Produce Marketing (Development and Regulation) Act to bring down such wastages;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether any emphasis has been laid in the Eleventh Five Year Plan to address this serious issue; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) As per the report of Rabo India Ltd., the level of wastage of agricultural food items is estimated to be about Rs.58,000 crores occurring at various stages of handling after harvesting due to fragmented farming, lack of adequate post-harvest infrastructure such as lack of cold chain facilities, transportation, proper storage facilities etc. The loss due to wastages could be reduced by promoting the development of food processing industries, strengthening of post harvest infrastructure and filling the gaps in the supply chain. However, the substantial rate of growth of the food processing industry from 7% in 2003-04 to 13-14% in 2006-07 and the increase in total investment in food processing sector to Rs.40,000 crore in 2006-07, has contributed to reduction of wastages and better value addition.

(b) and (c) No data is being maintained about State-wise/year-wise wastage of food items.

(d) and (e) Government of India has, with a view, *Inter-alia*, to facilitate improving the supply chains to reduce wastage of agricultural food items and improving farmers' share in consumer spending, formulated a Model Agricultural Produce Marketing (Development and Regulation) Act (APMC Act) and circulated to all the States/UTs in 2003 for making necessary amendments in their respective APMC Acts for bringing efficiency in the existing marketing systems and allowing the private markets and development of alternative marketing channels, such as, direct marketing, contract farming, e-trading etc. The details of the status of amendment of APMC Act are given in the enclosed Statement (*See* below). To facilitate the implementation of amended provisions, the Central Government has also formulated Model APMC Rules and circulated to the States/UTs for adoption in November, 2007.

(f) and (g) In order to increase level of processing and to promote food processing industries to exploit both the domestic and international market potential for processed food products, Vision 2015 Document has been finalized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, which envisages tripling the size of the processed food sector by increasing the level of processing of perishables from 6% to 20%, value addition from 20% to 35% and share in global food trade from 1.5% to 3% by 2015. An integrated strategy for promotion of

agribusiness - Vision, Strategy and Action Plan for the Food Processing Sector has also been approved by the Government. The thrust areas identified for strategic intervention include establishment of Mega Food Parks in identified clusters with appropriate backward and forward linkages, creation of integrated cold chains/value addition and preservation infrastructure, incentivising Foreign Direct Investment and Private investment in infrastructure, launching a major promotional campaign for the food processing sector and larger public investment for creation of critical rural infrastructure in food processing sector etc. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries has been implementing various schemes for promotion and development of food processing sector.

The Government has also identified thrust areas for strategic intervention for the 11th Plan by establishing Mega Food Parks, Cold – Chain/value addition and preservation infrastructure, capacity building and Human Resource Development by setting up of National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM), encouraging Research and Development, establishment/upgradation of Quality Control Laboratories and various promotional activities which would result in increasing the level of processing, value addition of food products, including perishables.

The ongoing Schemes of the Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in North Eastern States and Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and the National horticulture Mission in remaining States have provisions for assistance for creating post-harvest infrastructure including cold storage facilities through back-ended subsidy. The Ministry of Agriculture is also implementing Schemes titled 'Gramin Bhandaran Yojana' for construction/renovation of Rural Godowns in the country and 'Development/ Strengthening of Agricultural Marketing Infrastructure, Grading and Standardization' to facilitate development of marketing infrastructure.

The above measures are expected to reduce wastage apart from ensuring value addition.

Statement

The details progress of Reforms in Agricultural Markets (APMC Act) as on 30.09.08

Sl.No.	Stage of Reforms	Name of States/Union Territories
1	2	3
1.	States/UTs where reforms to APMC Act has been done for Direct Marketing; Contract Farming and Markets in Private/Coop Sectors.	Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Tripura.

1	2	3
2.	States/UTs where reforms to APMC Act has been done partially	(a) **Direct Marketing**: NCT of Delhi. (b) **Contract Farming**: Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh. (c) **Private markets** Punjab and Chandigarh
3.	States/UTs where there is no APMC Act and hence not requiring reforms	Bihar*, Kerala, Manipur, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, and Lakshadweep.
4.	States/UTs where APMC Act already Provides for the reforms	Tamil Nadu
5.	States/UTs where administrative action is initiated for the reforms	Mizoram, Meghalaya, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Puducherry, Jharkhand, NCT of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

*APMC Act is repealed w.e.f. 1.9.2006

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WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Hike in the price of rice

1. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any proposal to lift the ban on export of rice;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the price of rice is beyond the reach of common people;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether Government was aware that the prices may go further high due to the shortage of rice in the country; and

(f) if so, the steps to be taken to keep the price of rice affordable, especially in Andhra Pradesh ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.